

HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION 699

By Eldridge

A RESOLUTION to honor the memory of Denise LaSalle of Jackson.

WHEREAS, it was with great sadness and a profound sense of loss that the members of this General Assembly learned of the untimely death of Denise LaSalle, a multi-talented musician, gifted songwriter, consummate show-woman, and prolific singer of the blues, R&B, and gospel; and

WHEREAS, born Ora Denise Allen in LeFlore County, Mississippi, on July 16, 1939, to Nathaniel A. Allen, Sr., and Nancy Cooper Allen, the future star grew up listening to the Grand Ole Opry and found herself inspired by the likes of Ruth Brown, Dinah Washington, and LaVern Baker, legends in their own right whom one day she would call peers; and

WHEREAS, after spending her childhood singing in church choirs, the future Queen of the Blues began her legendary career working her way through the Chicago clubs and theaters. Adopting the stage name Denise LaSalle, she eventually caught the eye of Chess Records, which signed her on as a vocalist; and

WHEREAS, two years later, Denise LaSalle recorded and produced her own recording, "A Love Reputation." Chess Records began to utilize the talent it had hired, and Ms. LaSalle continued writing songs, sitting in with blues musicians and rising through the Chicago music scene; and

WHEREAS, during this period, she coproduced a number of songs for other artists, including Bill Coday's "Get Your Lie Straight" and the Sequins' "Hey Romeo," both of which were successful on the music charts; and

WHEREAS, in 1971, history was made when Ms. LaSalle worked with Westbound Records to release her legendary hit "Trapped By a Thing Called Love," which soared to #1 on

the R&B Chart and #13 on the Billboard Hot 100 and all but cemented her legacy amongst music's finest; and

WHEREAS, while performing across the Chicago and Memphis music scenes, Denise LaSalle worked with Mississippi-based Malaco Records in 1980, and she released a string of hit records during the next two decades, including such classics as *Lady in the Street*; *Right Place, Right Time*; *Love Talkin'*; *Hittin' Where It Hurts*; *Still Trapped*; *Still Bad*; and *Smokin' in Bed*; and

WHEREAS, Ms. LaSalle and her husband, James Wolfe, Jr., founded Wolfe Communications, Incorporated in 1984, and they soon launched WFKX-FM (KiX96), which was the first African-American owned and operated radio station in Jackson; and

WHEREAS, Denise LaSalle founded The National Association for the Preservation of the Blues in 1986, and she operated Denise LaSalle's Chique Boutique & Wigs Store from 1989 to 1995; and

WHEREAS, ever the show-woman, Denise LaSalle continued to perform in music festivals and release new records well into the 21st century. Crossing over into the realm of gospel music, she released *This Real Woman* in 2000, *There's No Separation* in 2001, and *Little Bit Naughty* in 2008. Her final album, *24 Hour Woman*, was released in 2010; and

WHEREAS, in 2013 and 2014, she was nominated for a Blues Music Award in the Soul Blues Female Artist category. On June 6, 2015, Ms. LaSalle was inducted into the Rhythm and Blues Music Hall of Fame; and

WHEREAS, one of her final endeavors was working to establish the Denise LaSalle Blues Academy of Performing Arts, an effort that her loved ones continue to this day; and

WHEREAS, Denise LaSalle will be remembered by her husband of forty years, James E. Wolfe, Jr., her children, her sister, and her many loving grandchildren; and

WHEREAS, Denise LaSalle was an exemplary singer, songwriter, and performer, whose music enriched the lives of countless fans during a career that spanned decades; and

WHEREAS, truly worthy of the title "Queen of the Blues," Denise LaSalle leaves behind an indelible legacy of musicianship that will live on in the hearts of her family and fans and on the albums we will continue to play in the years to come; and

WHEREAS, it is fitting that the members of this General Assembly should remember the bountiful life of this exceptionally talented artist and human being; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE ONE HUNDRED TENTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE, THE SENATE CONCURRING, that we honor the memory of Denise LaSalle, an iconic American musician who leaves behind a prolific, innovative, and extremely popular body of work.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that we express our sympathy and offer our deepest condolences to the family, friends, and fans of Ms. LaSalle.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that an appropriate copy of this resolution be prepared for presentation with this final clause omitted from such copy.